

Integrating Virtual Exchange into the University Classroom: An Online Course for University Educators

Trainer: Dr. Robert O’Dowd (University of León, Spain)
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Dates: TBC

This course will have six contact days over a three-week period. The course is a combination of live sessions via zoom and asynchronous tasks and discussions which will take place in a Virtual Learning Environment.

Total number of hours for participants: 24

- Total number of contact hours online via videoconference: 9 (1.5 hours per day)
- Estimated total number of off-line hours for reading and asynchronous interaction: 15

Live online sessions via zoom:

Day 1 -03/05/2021 - Week 1: 16.30-18.00 CET
Day 2 – 05/05/2021 - Week 1: 16.30-18.00 CET

Day 3 - 10/05/2021 - Week 2: 16.30-18.00 CET
Day 4 – 12/05/2021 - Week 2: 16.30-18.00 CET

Day 5 – 17/05/2021 - Week 3: 16.30-18.00 CET
Day 6 - 19/05/2021 - Week 3: 16.30-18.00 CET

[What is Virtual Exchange?](#)

Virtual exchange (VE), also commonly referred to as Telecollaboration or *Collaborative Online International Learning* (COIL), is a broad term used to describe different approaches to engaging students in online intercultural collaboration projects with partners from different cultural contexts within their programmes of study and under the guidance of teachers or trained facilitators. Virtual Exchange has become a very popular way for teachers across all subject areas to internationalise their classrooms and to give their students first-hand experience of intercultural communication and using their digital skills.

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Aim:

The aim of this online course is to familiarize participants with Virtual Exchange as a pedagogical activity for engaging students in authentic intercultural collaborative projects with international partners.

Objectives:

- Introduce the concept of Virtual Exchange and how it is being employed in university contexts.
- Make the participants aware of the potential learning outcomes of Virtual Exchanges.
- Offer a practical guide to the steps for setting up and running a Virtual Exchange in university education.
- Provide materials and activities to help teacher trainers prepare to engage their students in a telecollaborative exchange project.
- Enable participants to network with others in order to establish potential Virtual Exchange partnerships

Methodology:

Participants will be required to read about, observe, and discuss the different aspects of running a Virtual Exchange project. They will examine and analyse different models of telecollaborative task design, assessment, and strategies for integrating the exchanges into their coursework. There will be opportunities for general discussion and debate about the underlying principles and issues related to Virtual Exchange, including English as Lingua Franca, students' digital literacies and intercultural communication breakdown.

The course will be online. This will involve a videoconference session each day of the course followed by short tasks which participants will carry out individually or in groups before the following session.

Programme

Day 1 (week 1)	Day 2 (week 1)	Day 3 (week 2)	Day 4 (week 2)	Day 5 (week 3)	Day 6 (week 3)
What is Virtual Exchange?	What is an effective task in Virtual Exchange?	What communication technologies to use in	Virtual Exchange and issues of assessment	Dealing with intercultural problems and language issues in	Preparing a Virtual Exchange for your context

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Examples of Virtual Exchange projects in University Education	Designing effective tasks for your Virtual Exchange in your subject area	your Virtual Exchange?	Integrating the Virtual Exchange into your course and curriculum	Virtual Exchange	Finding partnerships for Virtual Exchange in the Utrecht Network
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Participant Profile:

The course should be of interest to teachers involved in university education who are interested in internationalising their courses and also in preparing their students for the global workplace. The course may also be of interest to members of International Offices who are interested in promoting Virtual Exchange as a form on internationalisation at their institutions.

A high level of digital literacy is not required to take part in the course. However, an openness to working with and learning about online technologies is a prerequisite. The course will be run in English and will take place online using an online Virtual Learning Environment as well as videoconferencing tools. Participants will need to be free for online sessions via videoconferencing as well as for off-line work during these four days.

Trainer's Biodata:

Dr. Robert O'Dowd is Associate Professor (professor titular) for English as a Foreign Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of León, Spain. He has taught at universities in Ireland, Germany and Spain and has over 40 publications on the application of Virtual Exchange in university and pre-university education settings. He was the founding president of the UNICollaboration academic organization for telecollaboration and virtual exchange (www.unicollaboration.org) and has been invited to be plenary speaker at international conferences in the US, Asia and across Europe.

Among recent activities, he was invited in 2019 to be co-editor of a special edition of the prestigious journal *Language Learning & Technology* on the theme of Virtual Exchange in Foreign Language Education. He also coordinated the Erasmus projects *Integrating International Networks in Higher Education (INTENT)* (2011-2014) and the European Policy Experiment *Evaluating and Upscaling Telecollaborative Teacher Education (EVALUATE)* (2017-2019).

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He is currently coordinating the Erasmus+ European Policy Experiment Virtual Innovation and Support Networks for Teachers (VALIANT) (2021-2024) and collaborates with other experts in the UNICollaboration organisation to offer comprehensive evaluation studies of Virtual Exchange programmes. Robert's publications are available here: <http://unileon.academia.edu/RobertODowd> and you can follow him on twitter @robodowd.